

A CONVERSATION WITH PHILIP DONLAY

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, HOW AND WHEN YOU STARTED WRITING.

I started writing in High School. I had an English teacher who believed in me and she encouraged me to keep writing. I was published in a national magazine when I was eighteen and from then on I was hooked.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE YOUR NOVEL?

I've had two passions in my life, flying and writing. I'd done the flying thing and was finally time to try to write the novel that had been on my bucket list for twenty-five years. I learned pretty quickly that writing books is harder than flying jets.

HOW DID YOU USE YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCE OR PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND TO ENRICH YOUR STORY?

By using my aviation expertise, I can bring the reader into the cockpit of a sophisticated jet airplane and put them behind the controls. The world traveler part didn't hurt any either. Typically, I've been to every spot on the globe I write about.

ANYTHING AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL IN YOUR NOVEL?

Of course, the piloting, the love of cars, the hotel and whisky preference of Donovan Nash. He and I have the exact same skill set, except he's younger, better looking and has a billion dollars.

ARE ANY CHARACTERS BASED ON PEOPLE YOU KNOW?

I use bits and pieces, but there are some larger aspects as well. I try to camouflage it but some of my friends suspect. It's fun to listen to them inform me as to how much they obviously influenced my books. I usually just smile at how wrong they are.

WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOUR NOVEL IS MORE PLOT DRIVEN OR CHARACTER DRIVEN?

That's the \$64.00 question isn't it? I think you have to have a mixture of both. I try to blend the character development into the storyline and do everything I can to keep the pacing nonstop.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE OR MOST SYMPATHETIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

For me, Donovan Nash is by far my most sympathetic character. He's the most complex and the most damaged character in my books. Despite his considerable resources and skill sets, his hidden past and the emotional turmoil make him sympathetic.

WHO IS YOUR LEAST SYMPATHIC CHARACTER? AND WHY?

It's Garrick Pearce. His blind rage and thirst for revenge make him one nasty character.

WHAT PART OF WRITING YOUR BOOK DID YOU FIND THE MOST CHALLENGING?

The relationship triangle between Donovan, Lauren, and Erica.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE THAT READERS WILL TAKE AWAY FROM YOUR BOOK?

My most fervent wish is that they had a great time reading the story. I think what readers take away from books is as unique as each reader. In this book I deal with loyalty and truth, as well as love— both past and present. There are life and death questions, and finally questions about revenge, friendship and courage. Take your pick as to what resonated.

HOW DO YOU DIAL UP THE TENSION TO KEEP YOUR READERS ON THE EDGE OF THEIR SEATS?

Most of that starts in the planning stage, but my number one rule is: Blow it up first and explain what happened afterward.

WHAT WRITERS HAVE INSPIRED YOU?

Ernest K. Gann, Richard Bach, Wilbur Smith, Martin Caidin, Alistair MacLean, Clive Cussler, Vince Flynn.

WHAT IS THE WRITING PROCESS LIKE FOR YOU?

It changes all the time. I used to write in great inspired chunks of time 2-3 days at a time then be spent. Now I chip away, writing nearly every day when the book is taking shape.

WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT WRITING THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

Stop for the day when you know exactly what the next sentence is going to be.

WHAT IS THE WORST PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT WRITING THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

Write every day even if you don't feel like it.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU? ANY NEW BOOKS IN THE PIPELINE?

Of course, there are outlines for at least three more Donovan Nash thrillers swirling in my brain.

ANY FINAL WORDS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT YOURSELF, YOUR NOVEL, OR LIFE IN GENERAL?

Don't let it get out....but I type with two fingers.